

## HISTORY OF SPIRITUAL RENEWAL GROUPS & THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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The first Spiritual Renewal Group was led by Les Scarborough from John Mark Ministries Inc. in 1995. Les was invited by a few members of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales who recognized that maintaining a growing, healthy ministry is at the best of times challenging. SRGs were seen as another 'means of grace' to promote faithfulness and enjoyment for people in ministry.

The original group completed the three-year cycle and divided to form two groups in 1998. Since then groups have not only continued for ministers (and other ministry leaders) in NSW but have started for ministers' wives and other women in ministry. From NSW, this renewal ministry has spread to Victoria and Queensland with ministers from Tasmania & South Australia benefitting as well.

Within NSW, Spiritual Renewal Groups are funded by Ministry & Mission Committee with assistance from the Sylvia Evans Trust, and by the members of each group.

WOULD LIKE TO JOIN A GROUP OR FIND OUT MORE .....

Email Paul McKendrick - [pmckendrick@pcnsw.org.au](mailto:pmckendrick@pcnsw.org.au)

### TO MAKE THE MOST OF THE RENEWAL RETREAT .....

- Come expecting God to grow and change you to become more fruitful
- Be willing to trust the process of the group
- Allow space before and after the annual retreat
- Leave work behind
- Bring an attentive, non-judgmental, attitude
- Be open, prepared to share with the group



## WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL RENEWAL GROUP?

A Spiritual Renewal Group (SRG), often called a retreat group is a small group of between six to ten people involved in ministry, who are committed to developing and maintaining healthy lives, relationships and churches.

SRGs are a safe place where members covenant to respect the trust and confidence of each group member, to meet for an extended period once each year for three years away from normal commitments, to engage with and share their stories, and contribute to a community focused on spiritual growth.

Through the retreat process, members explore what God is doing in their own lives and contribute to the spiritual growth of others through the gift of listening and reflecting on how God is growing each one of us 'up' in Christ.

Each retreat includes time alone with God, listening to and telling life-stories, ministry workshops, sharing the Lord's Supper, time for fun, and through formal affirmations, a time to encourage and affirm what God is doing in the lives of the retreat members.

The model followed by a Spiritual Renewal Group includes three phases, each phase corresponding to a year of the three-year cycle. In between retreats, catch-ups or 'mini retreats' are held either in person or through an electronic medium.

**Phase 1** is an opportunity for group members to connect, develop a group covenant, tell life stories, reflect and minister to each other, affirm each group member, and enjoy time in God's word for personal meditation and spiritual reflection.

**Phase 2** is a time of growing as group members reconnect and share catch-up stories. In addition, there is time for workshops covering leadership principles, ministry models, theological reflections, personal issues, time alone with God and affirmation.

**Phase 3** incorporates elements of phase two, however the purpose of this phase is to prepare the group for division and multiplication and includes the affirmation of additional facilitators.

While the process of reflecting on our life story may prompt us to recognize areas in our personal life, family life or ministry that God is seeking to transform, the group is not designed to provide any of the following:

- Direct support on an ongoing, regular basis. Members can choose to set up accountability processes with other members of the group, and seek prayer support. Any further support should be sought through alternative channels.
- Therapy. Counseling services are available through the Presbyterian Social Services.
- In-depth bible study. At different points within the retreat cycle group members may bring discussion papers on biblical, theological or ministry topics that challenge and broaden our horizons, however, the retreat group is not a bible conference or an opportunity to hone preaching skills.
- A holiday. Members will find the process of personal reflection and listening to others stories requires effort and concentration.